



Birch Rock Camp
Waterford ME
Birchrock.org

The Council

Of Birch Rock Camp

Fall Issue 2005

Birch Rock Camp Introduces *The Council*

How do you think you'd do on a pop quiz about Birch Rock traditions? Do you know who the 'shower barons' are, what the 'strut contest' is, or who the 'midnight phantom' is? Even if your sons are long-time campers here, you might still be in the dark about the more hilarious and obscure and enchanting lore of camp life.

Parents and alumni: you may not be able to head down to the waterfront for general swim, but you can keep up with new programs and beloved traditions through our new forum, *The Council*.

*Quiz answers appear at the end of this newsletter.

The Council's Mission

The Council's mission is to reach out to parents and alumni and prospective families: we'll keep you up-to-date with the camp as an evolving program and, more importantly, as a life-changing experience.

Parents who came up to the Rock this summer for visiting days participated in inaugural meetings of *The Council*. This newsletter will recap some of the highlights of those discussions. Looking forward, *The Council* will convene on future parent visiting days, and will maintain a newsletter on Birch Rock's new and improved web site.

A Board's Member's Perspective

Birch Rock board member Francie Campbell opened *The Council* with some personal observations. She saw something striking while visiting camp this summer, and believes it illustrates the extraordinary Birch Rock experience. One evening the whole camp filled the main lodge for a special presentation. A visiting ornithologist bought an injured owl and a slide show, and spoke to the boys for over an hour. Francie watched with

amazement as 73 boys, ages 7 through 15, sat attentively and respectfully and quietly during the entire talk. There was a lively question and answer period, and when bed time was announced, the whole camp filed out. No reprimands needed. No fooling around. Needless to say, unheard of behavior in the “real” world---standard behavior at Birch Rock.

Francie saw first-hand how a tight community, high expectations and a superb program brings out the best in Birch Rock boys. And she saw campers having fun, being silly and forgetting about the pressure to be cool.

Campers’ Perspectives

Senior camper Sean O’Toole proudly stood up before *The Council* to say how he feels about Birch Rock. He talked about the trouble he had adjusting to camp life his first summer and how settled he is now. He also spoke about the dear friends he has made at Birch Rock and about the fact that he may not have attempted to be friendly with those types of personalities in a regular school setting. The bond you make with a BRC friend lasts a lifetime.

Theo Lipsky from Lower Camp described a poster he often pondered in the camp library. Theo said that his camp experience is like the saying on the poster: “A ship in a harbor is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for.” Theo said that Birch Rock is proof of this: at Birch Rock you can escape your personal harbor of video games and candy, and participate in activities humans were ‘built for’. 11 year old Theo’s favorite activities are kayaking and art.

Nature Program is Back

At Birch Rock, we’re fiercely proud of our emphasis on traditional camping skills. Along with our core camp craft and wilderness trip programs, we’ve returned to our roots this year with a strong nature program. Blake Massey (twin brother of camp craft instructor Ryan ‘Rhino’ Massey) came on board after wrapping up a job banding hawks in Alaska last spring. Blake recently completed his Master’s Degree in wildlife conservation at the University of Massachusetts. He summed up his philosophy with a quote from one of his professors, “You care for what you love, you love what you know, and you know what you’re taught.” Blake’s passion is teaching nature, and nature as it really is--a struggle for survival for both plants and animals. The nature program was wildly popular with campers this year, with around 40 badges earned.

Camp Craft Rocks!

Rhino Massey was back for his 7th summer at BRC as head of the CIT program and camp craft director. Under Rhino's leadership, camp craft is the crown jewel of Birch Rock's program. Rhino inspires virtually every boy to master knife and fire rights, and to learn survival skills. These are the things that set Birch Rock apart, building basic competence that will stay with a camper for a lifetime.

Rhino's interest in Native American lore led him to develop a thrilling game called 'Geronimo'. Fast paced, filled with Indian symbols and based on history and rituals, Geronimo takes the boys on a wild capture the flag-like adventure.

Tree Talks

Mark 'the Weaz' Sutherland takes pride in running Birch Rock's unique Tree Talk program, which brings the whole camp together to talk about character development. Each Sunday afternoon topics like community building, individuality, trust and communication are brought to life in skits and activities. The most anticipated Tree Talk event of the season is the giving of 'warm fuzzies'---positive comments campers write to each other. Mark has been at Birch Rock Camp for 11 summers.

Camp Director Mike Mattson

Mike, a 23 year veteran of the Rock, knows a thing or two about BRC lore, ritual and legends. At *The Council* meetings this summer, Mike filled families in on Birch Rock traditions that might not make it home in campers' letters. He talked about fun traditions in the program like the Shower Barons, Strut Contest, and Flour Cake. He also talked about the camp's long distance swim program with the Duck, Loon, Seal and Whale swims.

Alumni Relations Director Rich Deering

Rich has been a camper, counselor, and director at BRC for 33 years. His commitment to the camp community today primarily focuses on the recruitment and relations of Birch Rockers and families past, present and future. He shared with *The Council* the critical role that parents, alumni and campers play in promoting the spirit of the camp's values: faithful fellowship; a respect of our natural world and those whom we share it with; building a stronger self and reaching out to help others.

Finally, Rich extended the community's heart-felt gratitude in fostering a partnership in parenting. For 79 seasons, Birch Rock stands as one of the smallest and oldest residential boys' summer camps in Maine.

"I feel so thankful every year to be part of this special community that renews our spirit, spreads our wings and lets us fly with an incredible cast of characters who are committed to mentoring, listening, learning and leading. We are all proud to be Birch Rockers!"

Some Interesting facts about BRC in 2005

75% of campers are returnees; 90% of staffers are veteran Birch Rockers
31 campers were new to BRC

Geography

59% New England (36% Maine); 19 Mid Atlantic; 8 % Mid-West;
6% South; 9% Foreign and 3 from California!

Enrollment

45% Campers were 7 Weekers; 55% were 3 ½ Weekers

Quiz answers:

Shower Barons are counselors in charge of getting campers into the showers each Sunday in a minimum amount of time, with a maximum amount of fun!

The Strut Contest is a competition held on the waterfront as evening activity on Beach Day. The campers will each individually strut, dance or hop down the catwalks between a group of chanting counselors and end their strut with a crazy leap or dive into the water.

The Midnight Phantom is usually a pair of counselors who will occasionally sneak into cabins at night and play silly pranks on the campers and their cabin counselor. The initials 'M.P.' are usually left somewhere on the scene to be found the next morning when the cabin wakes up.